The Ultimate Interview With Gary Gygax

This interview was conducted by Ciro Alessandro Sacco of www.dungeons.it. It is presented here with his permission.

INTRODUCTION BY CIRO ALESSANDRO SACCO

As many, many gamers around the world and especially Italian ones, I have always hoped to have the privilege to meet Gary Gygax, the co creator of Dungeons & Dragons and creator of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game. My hopes were at last satisfied when Gary Gygax came in Italy in 1999, for the Mod Con gaming convention: unfortunately, the large (and growing!) queue of fans eager to have their D&D products signed by him forced me to avoid any questions (nonetheless I have a D&D Basic Set and a B2 module signed by him!).

Then this year on the excellent web site EN World (www.enworld.org), Gary Gygax started a long thread about himself, his projects and everything else that might be imagined by gamers. I was extremely pleased to see how easygoing, friendly and accessible Gary is to his/her fans, so I gathered my courage and finally asked him for an interview, an interview that quickly grew in size to seven pages of questions (!) due to the long research in magazines as "White Dwarf", "Dragon", "Space Gamer", catalogues and Gary's biography and bibliography. I want to add that the interview was edited by myself and Gary. I'm really proud of this little cooperative effort with the Father of D&D/AD&D and one of the nicest, open and less pretentious people I have ever met in all the facets of life. The fact he accepted to spend so much time on the interview, despite his busy schedule, it's the best proof of this.

INTRODUCTION BY GARY GYGAX

Here I must insert my own introductory comment. The laundry list of questions that follow were not initially well received by me. What a chore, I thought, as I looked through the lot. Of course many of the inquiries need be answered in greater detail that has been furnished; but the fact is that I have to earn a living writing, so the time called for to respond fully is just not possible save by being taken in bits and pieces over a period of weeks. Although I have gone to some lengths in several areas to supply as full an explanation as possible, all things considered, I am not totally satisfied. While I enjoy communicating with my fellow gamers, there are limits to the extent I can do so in this sort of interview. If you find my answers incomplete or unsatisfactory, sorry: I did what time allows just now, as Ciro can't wait forever for my response. Contact him about this and possibly he'll compile another list. Then I will groan, grumble at him, and eventually answer those new questions too, most likely.

Allow me to add that Mr. Ciro Alessandro Sacco has clearly spent a lot of time researching and preparing his questions. Because of that, I made a greater effort than usual to answer as fully as I was able. Be sure to thank Ciro for this, as he deserves lauds for his penetrating questions covering subjects seldom if ever touched on by other interviewers.

GARY GYGAX, THE MAN

Does that mean you think I have grown up? Wrong!

Could you please tell us about yourself: age, hobbies outside gaming, how did you discover gaming in first place and so on?

I was born 27 July 1938 in Chicago, Illinois. It was there that learned to play games: pinochle at age five and chess at age six. Of course, playing with toy soldiers, 'ruleless military miniatures' if you will, occupied a good bit of my time then too, with blocks and Tinker Toys adorning the battlefield. My family removed to Lake Geneva in the summer of 1946. Later on there, various board games and chess variants were added, while in my teens we tried some simple rules, along with ladyfinger firecrackers fired from Britons cannons, to add some order to games with toy soldiers. That was not a success. Finally, in 1958 I came upon The Avalon Hill Company's board wargame, 'Gettysburg'. That sealed my fate, for thereafter I was a wargamer and eventually a gamer in the larger sense.

Hobbies of the past include stamp collecting, tropical fish, small animal keeping, hunting, fishing, hiking and camping. Along with reading a fair number of books of fiction and non-fiction, listening to music (classical, blues, Spanish, and modern jazz the favourites), that pretty well covers my leisure time activities.

I noticed a 'paranormal experiences' section in your biography: do you really believe in the paranormal?

Of course there is the paranormal. To deny it is to flout reason. There are things that happen that can not be explained by any scientific means. Some of that is paranormal. Exactly what is paranormal, what isn't, I'll leave to those who worry about such things. I do know, for example, that things have happened to me that have no rational or scientific explanation and those I consider as outside the known: paranormal.

Reading your biography, I noticed you did some work in the boardgaming field, especially for Avalon Hill. How this experience started? Was it an interesting one? Did you attempt to sell D&D to them?

The game you speak of, 'Alexander the Great', along with another board wargame, "Dunkirk" (the invasion of France and the Low Countries in 1940), were originally published by a small game company, Guidon, or which you have a question abut later on. When that company went out of business, Avalon Hill contacted me to secure an agreement to revise and publish the Alexander game. As I had been a fan, then became a friend of, Tom Shaw, then the V.P of Avalon Hill, and his assistant was Don Greenwood, a gamer I had known for some years via postal exchange and he being a member of association I had co-founded, the International Federation of Wargamers, working with them was quite pleasant.

One of the most satisfying compliments I ever received was from one of the principals of Game Designer's Workshop, that laud in regards to the detail of the Order of Battle of the forces involved in the "Dunkirk" game. Since originally designing it, I have done more research, corrected some errors I discovered in the German OB, and one day I would very much like to see the campaign in play as a computer game.

In the summer of 1973, before my old friend, Don Kaye, joined me to found Tactical Studies Rules, I did indeed call Avalon Hill and ask if they might be interested in publishing the game that was to be known as D&D. They laughed at the idea, turned it down. In 1975 Tom called back to ask if maybe they could take over publication. It was my turn to laugh. After that we laughed together about the whole affair when we met at various gaming conventions.

One last thing. I did another board wargame, this one published by TSR. In 1976 we released my 'Little Big Horn' game, the tactical conflict between the 7th Cavalry under Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and the various 'Sioux' and allied Indian tribes. Two other small publishers likewise introduced their own like games at Origins that year, as it was the 100th anniversary of the battle. Of course, all three companies suffered sales-wise, as interested gamers were divided. The LBH game was actually quite accurate, and the Cavalry had a fair chance to triumph, just as Custer had hoped - if they stayed together and had their pack train with ammunition with them.

In the same biography I read: "Editor-in-Chief, Guidon Games (publisher of wargaming rules and wargames)". What kind of company was Guidon Games? An amateur publisher or a professional one? Did Guidon Games pay you for your work?

Guidon Games had a game shop, sold gaming via the mail, published a magazine and likewise printed and sold military miniatures rulebooks and boxed board wargames. They were small but certainly a legitimate company (I dislike using 'professional', as they professed nothing: they were a commercial enterprise). I was paid for the work I did for them, yes. Unfortunately, sales volume did not make the income received thus sufficient to do more than supplement income from other work. I was asked to go to work for them full time. That would have required me to move to the state of Maine. Tom Wham did so, but I thought their new location was a poor choice. Furthermore, the company was not run in an aggressive and responsive manner. In my opinion there was no chance for growth and success as things stood and I said so to Guidon. Sadly, I was correct in my judgement. On the positive side, it was then (1972) that I determined I needed to start my own publishing company.

At the time were your various efforts enough to support you and your family or were you forced to have a 'real job' outside the gaming field?

As noted, I had to do various other work after leaving the insurance underwriting and sales field late in 1970. In order to have a job where I could work at home, have as much opportunity as possible to devote to game design and writing, I learned shoe repair, acquired the necessary equipment and began doing such trade from my residence. That was something of a sacrifice, as the sand table in my basement had to move to make room for machinery, but that big table found a home in Don Kaye's garage. It was not until the middle of 1975 that income from game-related work was sufficient to provide my entire income, that money needed to support myself and my family.

How big was the gaming market in the '70s? I gather that Avalon Hill and then SPI were THE publishers of the age with a mainly historical line - the first efforts in the fantasy and SF field seem to start really with the publication of "Godsfire" by Metagaming... Is this correct?

No accurate data regarding the size of the consumer audience for board wargames and military miniatures in the 1960s (when I became active) and in the early 1970s is known to me. My considered estimate for the consumer audience the USA and Canada during that period is from 100,000 to 150,000, this including 'Diplomacy' game players. Avalon Hill was far and away the largest publisher back then. SPI eventually moved into second place in the early 1970s.

As for Metagaming Concepts, I don't recall them being active before 1975 or 1976 (we sold/distributed their product line for a time). D&D was certainly the first fantasy game that achieved any success, and that was followed by "Traveller" (the first big sci-fi role playing game N.d.R.) from GDW. I think it was after the success of D&D that efforts to publish other fantasy, SF, and general RPGs were begin. Of course I am going back nearly 30 years and my recollection might be faulty.

TSR AND THE BIRTH OF D&D

Actually, the D&D game was conceived and written about a year before we formed a partnership, had a company aimed at publishing it.

Surely this question has been asked you a zillion times, but, for the benefit of our Italian readers, could you kindly tell it once more? How was D&D born?

I wrote a 50 page manuscript that I titled 'The Fantasy Game' late in 1972. Much of the content of the game was drawn straight from 'Chainmail - Rules for Medieval Military Miniatures', the 'Man-to-Man' and 'Fantasy Supplement' portions that I had authored, to be exact. This manuscript was sent in the mail to a dozen or so of my wargaming associated around the USA for their play-testing and feedback. The reception was overwhelming and all positive. In the spring of 1973 I revised the material to 150 page length - essentially what was printed as the D&D game's three rules booklets in January 1974. This draft of the game was sent out to about 30 people and the reaction was so intense that I was sure we had a winning game. As an aside, at that point I thought we would sell at least 50,000 copies to wargamers and fantasy fans. I underestimated the audience a little. It wasn't until the middle of 1975 that the true scope of the appeal of the 'Dungeons & Dragons' game was understood by me.

As to how I conceived and wrote the game in the first place, that would take many pages to explain, so I won't go into it other than to say it was the culmination of more than 30 years of living and doing that enabled the process.

In your FAQ you write "1973: Gary and Don Kaye form Tactical Studies Rules, an equal partnership" and then "1974: Brian Blume is admitted as an equal (1/3) partner". Did both of you admit a new partner to help financing the publication of D&D?

As an introductory explanation and a matter of possible interest to your readers, Don Kaye was a childhood friend. As a boy under age eight, I spent most of the summer in Lake Geneva. I met Don there when I was six years old. He was a friend of my usual playmate there, John Rasch, who lived next door. When my family moved to Lake Geneva permanently, when I was eight, Don was a year-round buddy. We bicycled, camped, gamed, and generally 'hung out' together from then on - with a lot of other lads of course. Unlike me, Don was a good student and he encouraged me, without much success, to pay more attention to studies. He is greatly missed.

Don and I wanted to get the D&D game out as soon as possible. If we had waited until sales of our one set of military miniatures rules, 'Cavaliers & Roundheads', generated sufficient funds, it would have been 1975 before we could publish.

I know that 1,000 copies of D&D were initially produced, the fabled First Edition. Is it true that you and your partners personally assembled every copy and then shipped them to customers and distributors?

It is absolutely true. We wet and stuck the front and spine labels on the boxes, collated the reference sheets, folded them and placed them in the box, then collated the three booklets, put them in, closed the box, and set the completed game on a shelf. That goes for the second printing in browns boxes also, 2,000 copies run in October of 1974. The next run of 3,300 was sold in white wrapped pre-printed boxes, but hand assembly was also done, that in the basement of the house I lived in. In fact, I personally toted all the cartons of booklets, 9,000 in all, from the truck tailgate down into the basement storeroom. It was a hot June day in 1975 that I remember well today.

After that run we found a printer to do all assembly, ran 25,000 late that summer for delivery to the building we were in process of acquiring to house the business.

Regarding distributors, what were your distribution channels at the time? I suppose that wholesalers were mainly in the historical gaming business - what was their reaction to this new weird game based on fantasy and with no board or counters?

At inception, Tactical Studies Rules sold direct to consumers, shipped to game shops and hobby stores and wholesaled only to three distributors. Interestingly, those three were all manufacturers of miniature figurines. Those 'distributors' ordered in small quantities, 25s and 50s. In 1975 we picked up one or two real distributors. Joining the Hobby Industry Association of America and exhibiting at their annual trade show in 1976, TSR Hobbies, Inc. then began to establish a regular network of distributors.

How long did it take to sell these first 1,000 copies? What was the feedback from gamers? Is it true that you received many phone calls during the night to clarify some obscure aspect of the rules?

The first sale was an individual copy to a gamer and it was mailed off at the end of January. The initial print run of 1,000 copies took seven months to sell out - February through September 1974. We received the second printing of the D&D game in October 1974, shipped those beginning in November. Those were out of stock by May and in June we received the print run of 3,000 copies noted above. Heritage Models did the printing, and their charge for the job was covered in their over-run of 300 copies, these they sold to shops. The arrangement worked well for us, as cash flow was always a problem.

Parenthetically, photostat copies of the manuscript rules were made, and when the commercial game was published, fans not willing or financially unable to expend the princely sum of $10 for the product did likewise, copying the material on school (mainly college/university) machines. We were well aware of this, and many gamers who had spent their hard-earned money to buy the game were more irate than we were. In all, though, the 'pirate' material was more helpful that not. Many new fans were made by DMs who were using such copies to run their games.

From the end of 1972 on I received much mail and many phone calls. Unlike my current schedule, in those days I did a lot of work late at night, and many a telephone call was received after midnight. I recall one enthusiastic young DM who 'took me on a phone adventure' that lasted two hours, concluding well after 2 AM, so he could test both his DMing ability and his material. Of course most of the calls were in regards to rules questions or inquiries about how best to handle some aspect of game mastering. As the number of enthusiasts grew, I finally had to have my telephone number 'unlisted,' or else I would have had to spend most of each day talking to DMs and players.

GARY GYGAX AND DAVE ARNESON

Not a lot to say here, as it has been over 20 years since Dave and I had much to do with each other.

What was exactly the role of Dave Arneson in the creation of D&D? In his http://www.castleblackmoor.com web site, Dave defines himself 'the father of role playing'.

As Dave noted in his interview in 'Different Worlds' #3, I wrote the whole of the D&D game. Arneson contributed ideas for the D&D game. Also, some of the contents of the D&D Game supplement, 'Blackmoor', contained his concepts and writing, as developed and edited by Tim Kask.

As for paternal claims to roleplaying, well, if Dave wishes to call himself that, okay. That's his affair. He must be very old, though, because as far as I can tell, roleplaying began about the time children in past historical ages played "let's pretend" games.

For my part I am satisfied with whatever credits others care to assign to me and I believe my work speaks amply for itself.

Was Dave Arneson's role recognized by TSR Hobbies? How many times did he sue TSR Inc.? I remember hearing from Peter Adkison in 1997 that he had finally settled the last suit of Dave against TSR Inc.

As to Arnesons's role in the creation of D&D, Tactical Studies Rules (actually me in this case) listed his name on the product, right? His name continued to be so shown when Tactical Studies Rules was acquired by TSR Hobbies, Inc. He received royalties according to his contract. The 'Blackmoor' supplement was published and promoted. That answers that question fully I should think.

Only one legal action was filed by Dave against TSR. That never went to court, was settled.

What Peter Adkison was referring to, I am sure, is the acquisition of certain remaining rights held by Arneson in the D&D game. There was no litigation involved, of that I am sure. WotC made Dave Arneson an offer for residual rights, he accepted, and that was that. I speak with authority here, because thereafter the same process acquired the residual rights I held.

What is your relationship with Dave Arneson now?

As far as I am concerned, one might characterize the relationship between Dave and me as distant but cordial. We are separated by distance and approach to gaming. We have no interaction in gaming or casual communication, but when we meet we enjoy a pleasant exchange. As a matter of fact, if Dave were to be running a miniatures game at a convention I was attending, I would make an effort to play in it.

THE FACTS ABOUT THE RECALLED D&D MODULE

A bizarre affair indeed, that!

The D&D module B3 Palace of the Silver Princess was published in two versions, one with an Orange cover (written by Jean Wells) and another one with a Green cover (rewritten by Tom Moldvay and published in Italian too). Legend has that you ordered the recall of the Orange version because you considered the artwork questionable in many cases and that the entire print run was destroyed, excluding for a box of 75 copies tossed in the trash (and quietly taken away in the night) and some unreturned employees' copies. This module is one of the most sought after by collectors and of course it can command very high prices. What is the truth about this module?

You ask the man who decided on the 'Amazon' and 'Temptress' illos in original D&D, the 'Eldritch Wizardry' supplement cover about something in the artwork in Jean Well's module being 'objectionable'? I am quite at a loss as to how to respond.

Actually, it was Kevin Blume who literally pitched a fit about the product, demanded it be recalled. I had no input into the matter and I would have quashed his objection had I been able to do so. The fact is, though, that there were three persons on the Board of Directors of the company - Brian Blume, Kevin Blume and me. Similarly, while I was the President and CEO, Brian placed himself in charge of creative affairs, as President of that activity, while Kevin was President of all other operations. This effectively boxed me off into a powerless role. If a 'President' under me did something I didn't like, my only recourse would be to take the matter to the Board of Directors where I would be outvoted two to one.

From my perspective, those 'faces' were all pretty ugly from about 1981 on.

The first company you were partner in was Tactical Studies Rules but, as you write in your own FAQ "1976: Don dies of a heart attack in January. His wife is impossible to deal with. TSR Hobbies Inc. is formed, and this corporation buys out Don's widow". I remember reading that Don Kaye was instrumental in the D&D publication, having cashed an insurance policy to have money enough for printing the first 1,000 copies. Is this true? Do you think if Don Kaye had not passed on, things would have evolved in a different way?

Don Kaye borrowed against a life insurance policy he had, the sum drawn out being $1,000.

There is no question in my mind that had Don Kaye lived, the whole course of later events at TSR would have been altered radically. Don was not only a very intelligent guy, a gamer, but he was also one who was not given to allowing the prospect of greater profits to cloud his judgement in regards the long-term viability of the enterprise he co-founded, was so proud of.

As it's written in your biography, from 1976 to 1983 you were President of TSR Hobbies despite Brian and Melvin Blume having the 65% and then the 70% of company's shares. Were the relations between you and the Blumes good or at least tolerable? Did they give you directions about the company's evolution and business strategy or did you set them by yourself?

Melvin Blume was Brian's father. He purchased shares in the corporation. Then, at Brian's insistence, I agreed that Kevin, a younger brother of Brian then managing the accounting and fulfilment operations at TSR, be allowed to own those shares. They were duly transferred and then Kevin became a member of the Board of Directors.

I have spoken earlier of the structure that the Blumes imposed on TSR in 1981. As another example of things before then, late 1979 or early 1980, I issued some instructions. When Brian heard what I had ordered he shouted loudly for all to hear: «I don't care what Gary said. I own controlling interest in this company and it will be done the way I say!». I should have parted ways with TSR then and there, but I still had a lot of loyalty to the company and the vision upon which it had been created. Anyway, from that point on, I had little control, and in general what I desired be done was ignored or the exact opposite was put in place.

I know that in those first years D&D and RPGs enjoyed a phenomenal growth and TSR Hobbies experienced booming sales not only in the US but in various other countries too. At its peak TSR, Inc. (successor of TSR Hobbies) employed over 300 staffers according to The Space Gamer # 69 (May - June 1984). The famous "James Dallas Egbert III case" seemed to have a decisive role for the media coverage of the game and the booming of sales thereafter. Could you describe to our readers this case and its consequences?

James Dallas Egbert III was a troubled young man who attended university in Michigan. I understand that he played the D&D game and possibly he and some of his associates might have explored some tunnels under the university to see if they might serve as a place to live roleplay. All of that was reported in the news media here, but the credibility of the news media is suspect. There came a time when Egbert disappeared from his school and his mother called in a private detective, one William Dear, to investigate. Mr Dear was imaginative, if nothing else, and he apparently seized upon the opportunity to sensationalize the matter, going so far as to suggest that Egbert was lost in the steam tunnels or that, because of D&D, some foul play might have occurred. The news media gave such wild speculation a lot of coverage. Then Egbert was discovered in Texas where he had gone to be with his father. Of course the continual press coverage of this, their mention of the D&D game and its 'dangers' caused sales to skyrocket. We couldn't print fast enough to fill orders. I had projected growth for the year to go from approximately $4.2 million to $8.5 million for that fiscal year. Because of the 'Egbert Affair', TSR grossed $16.5 million. Gross pre-tax profit was about $4.25 million. Immediately after those results, the Blumes took what was effectively total control of TSR. The corporation subsequently realized greater gross sales, but never thereafter did the profit margin come close to that. I did not believe in heavy borrowing and expansion beyond the means of the corporation to manage comfortably out of profits and the Blumes did. Staff size was also something the Blumes seemed to revel in. There were indeed over 300 employees in TSR in 1983 and 1984. They oversaw all personnel - human resources as they preferred to call it - save for a small personal staff of my own doing special creative projects and assisting me with my duties. Although I did not have any direct control of operations, I was still seeing to the corporate 'face', directing advertising and promotion and generally in the forefront where business deals with large companies were to be conducted.

Did you ever read 'The Dungeon Master' book by Dear, the private detective that solved this case? What was the book's impact at the time and what is your judgement of it?

No, I never read it. Undoubtedly those that did got a rather misleading impression of RPGs in general and D&D in particular. Any impact that the book in question had was minimal in my judgement. It was the news media, particularly TV, which caused real harm to the repute of the game with their unfounded assertions and gross exaggerations.

In 1981 you negotiated a distribution deal with Random House, the biggest US publisher. Did you approach them or vice versa? What was the result of this deal for TSR Hobbies?

I was in process of negotiations with Simon & Schuster when the woman who was then the VP of Sub-rights Licensing at Random House telephoned me.

Not surprisingly, this was instigated by her two sons, both of whom were then avid D&D gamers. When she mentioned that we could conclude a deal speedily, get into book trade distribution in a matter of months, not a year, I immediately booked a flight to New York City. After a couple of days of meetings we had struck an excellent agreement, good for Random House and great for TSR, I assure you.

Along D&D and AD&D, TSR Hobbies attempted to diversify publishing many board games, for example Divine Right (one of the most popular and still one of the most sought in the collector's market), granting Judges Guild licenses to publish products 'approved' for D&D and AD&D, granting Grenadier Models to produce official AD&D miniatures and selling licenses for a coloring album, party items and much more. How many licenses did TSR Hobbies sell regarding D&D and AD&D? What was the most weird product carrying the D&D or AD&D logos? I'd go for the party items, but you could now better...

You are lumping apples and oranges together here, so I'll divide my answer into separate parts.

TSR did seek to broaden its base of games by publishing other RPGs and also board games. Had any of the non-fantasy RPGs been properly supported, I an certain that each such game would have established a fan base and made a small but sufficiently ample profit so as to justify retaining it as an active line. Similarly, as you note, the "Divine Right" game was excellent, and had it been promoted and managed properly, it too could have become a standard title on the TSR backlist of games.

Licensing is another matter entirely. It is generally a most desirable thing, as contracting with another firm to allow them to use trade marks and images to produce ancillary products, or place such marks and likenesses on their products, is both 'free money' and excellent advertising. The figurines license granted to Grenadier was the first given by TST, as I recall, and then a succession of others followed. The license granted to Judge's Guild was, admittedly, a lot of work in that products had to be carefully reviewed for continuity with the AD&D and D&D game systems. This was not handled well at TSR, and eventually the license was withdrawn. Thereafter I strongly advocated arranging a licensing agreement with Mayfair Fames for their 'Role Aids' product line, but I was outvoted in the board meeting considering the question. A bit later on I was actively promoting a merger with Games Workshop, but the Blumes managed to frighten off Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone. Of course that merger would have given those two 25% interest in TSR, and the control of the company would no longer have rested in the hands of Brian and Kevin. Such are the vicissitudes of corporate affairs.

As for the most unusual product licensed, I suppose I'd have to vote for the green 'Big Wheel' plastic tricycle with a dragon head on the front of the handle bars (Amazing! N.d.R.). My youngest son, Alex, surely did enjoy riding one when he was a tot though.

Exactly, when and for what reasons your relationship with the Blumes started to degenerate in, forgive me for the expression, an all out war for the control of the company?

This has been pretty well answered in various responses above. The motivation for the Blumes to want to assume control was, in my opinion, the money. My receiving royalties, small percentages, but meaningful when sales volume was taken into account, and the recognition given mainly to me seemed to have clouded their perspective and affected their judgement most adversely.

In 1982 TSR Hobbies decided to terminate the license to Grenadier Models and started producing its own AD&D Official miniatures and then a line of toys. There was an interview to Kevin Blume in The Space Gamer #63 (May - June 1983) about this subject. He said: "We licensed part of our AD&D toy line to LJN, a large company in our field (...). We retained for ourselves anything else that might come from Dungeons & Dragons". Why TSR Hobbies embarked in such operations in fields already having a lot of well established manufacturers? Were such choices part of the reason of, I quote your FAQ, "TSR had accumulated $1.5 million debt that they [the Blumes and others managers] couldn't figure out how to pay"?

Diversification into the manufacture of miniature figurines for use with role-playing and other games was not a bad idea in my opinion. If the new undertaking had been managed properly, integrated with the publishing, the miniatures line could have been profitable and enhanced the corporation's market share. That publishing and figurine manufacturing, properly integrated and supported, function well is well demonstrated by the success of Games Workshop. That established, I do not believe that TSR did manage the matter well. However it was not a substantial factor in the debt position that the corporation found itself in in 1984. To the best of my knowledge the following are the major contributing factors:

- the Blumes had acquired, without approval of the Board of Directors, a craft company called Greenfield Needlewomen. This company was owned by one of their relatives. While military/fantasy miniatures might be successfully integrated into a game publishing company, a line of needlecraft and associated products certainly could not.

- Kevin Blume had overprinted the previously successful multiple-path D&D adventure books, so that there were in the warehouse some millions of copies of these various books that could not be sold.

- over a million dollars of systems furniture had been purchased or leased, and it was sitting unused, unpacked for the most part, sufficient for hundreds of employees that did not exist.

- TSR was over-staffed, 300 plus employees, while operations needed less than 200. Furthermore, there was considerable nepotism involved.

- The corporation owned and leased over 70 automobiles.

There were other egregious things contributing to the financial problems of the corporation, but the above are the salient ones.

In the same interview, Kevin Blume states: "I mean, Mattel would desperately love to buy us [TSR Hobbies]" and this after 'debunking' rumours of you and Duke Siefried leaving TSR Hobbies and forming your own company and the Blumes selling remaining shares to Mattel itself. Was this true? Were there large entertainment and toy corporations interested in acquiring TSR Hobbies? Considering the company had enjoyed such an amazing growth in a few years, had some very successful product lines, very loyal fans and strong brands, the idea itself surely had a lot of merit in their eyes (especially for Mattel, I suppose).

TSR had received inquiries about acquisition from other corporations for several years prior to 1984. As far as I know the Blumes were not interested in selling.

I never considered forming another company, with or without Duke Siefried.

As a matter of fact, though, I had been contemplating for some time the prospect of taking TSR public. When I encouraged employees to acquire shares in the corporation it was because I assumed that the company would move into the public arena. The Blumes opposed me in this.

As for interest in acquisition, I offer the following factual account. As the CEO of Dungeons & Dragons Entertainment Corp. I was meeting with Mr. Sid Shineberg, President of Universal in 1984. I had made the appointment to discuss a motion picture based on the game. In the course of that hour-plus long meeting, Mr. Shineberg said, and I quote as nearly as memory permits, the following: "We would like to acquire you (TSR/D&D Entertainment), joint venture with you, or engage in just about any co-venture you name". Of course I was knocked back on my mental heels, but I think I kept a poker face. What an opportunity, I thought. Then the reality of the Blumes came to cloud the rosy vistas I had glimpsed. I thanked him, explained that I held only a minority ownership in TSR, but assured Mr. Shineberg that I would relate Universal's interest to the Board of Directors at its next monthly meeting. Even as I said that I knew there would be no positive response from the Blumes. That proved to be the case.

As a positive, though, I took from that meeting a positive assurance that Universal would give D&D Entertainment a very positive look when it came time to present a major motion picture project I was working on. Right after the meeting with Mr. Shineberg, I met with Orson Wells. He subsequently agreed to become a part of the project, take the main supporting role. Not many weeks later I met with Edgar Gross, then the Executive Producer for John Boorman, and after another meeting that was moving forward too, with a date to be set to meet with Mr. Boorman to present the script and see if he would produce and direct. With that done, all that remained was to take the package to Universal, meet again with Mr. Shineberg. A very strong prospect for getting a deal indeed, all that. Before I could go further down that road I had to return to Lake Geneva because of the financial crisis at TSR (1984). This you mention later on, so I'll speak no more of that at this point.

Here I must again digress to provide the reader with the background that will enable a better understanding of TSR under the Blumes. After the reorganization where Brian and Kevin Blume boxed my position as president and CEO into a powerless role, they were evidently not completely satisfied. A part of that possibly stemmed from the fact that by sheer force of personality, along with occasional mutterings about leaving the company, I managed to stop some of their plans and even managed to get something I thought wise past them and into the works, so to speak. A part of their dissatisfaction might have stemmed from their own self-doubts. Whatever the reasons, the Blumes decided that TSR must join the American Management Association ("AMA" - thankfully now defunct). This was done without my approval. Soon the company was visited by their "experts," people who in my opinion were likely helpful to widget manufacturers and firms providing ordinary services. As a matter of fact these "experts" had no clue about the hobby game field. That evident lack notwithstanding, the Blumes had the AMA people assess TSR operations, then give all employees 'training' in endless meetings, those for the upper tier of personnel at expensive resort facilities. I attended one only, and my judgement was that the whole of the program was farcical, nothing but waste. As I was vocal in my opinion, it is likely that that solidified the Blumes in their commitment to the AMA.

Their next step was to expand the Board of Directors to six, bringing in three 'outside' directors, all members of the AMA. One was a lawyer from a large Milwaukee law firm. Another was a personnel officer from a Milwaukee area company. The third owned a company that made medical equipment. I was absolutely astonished at such a move. Of course these three directors, brought in and paid because of the Blumes, "suits" quite ignorant of hobby gaming and generally hostile to the culture I had originally created for the company, were solidly behind Kevin and Brian and opposed to me. That I referred to them as Moe, Shemp, and Larry likely didn't endear me to them. That those three stooges of the Blumes sat on the Board of Directors for some two years and facilitated the mismanagement of TSR by the Blumes in undeniable.

Whatever I brought before the board was likely to be voted down by a five to one margin.

Not long after Williams gained control of TSR, she dismissed those stooges. They knew I was going to do that the instant I gained control, but I do believe that they thought Williams would not, as they supported her. That, of course is typical but very ironic to me, as under her management TSR came to far worse straits than had occurred under the Blumes, albeit it took more time for the collapse to occur. When it did, TSR had about $30 million in secured debt and what I believe was in the neighbourhood of at least two or three million of unsecured debt, possibly much more. I know the secured debt figure, because I was an unsecured debtor who was owed six figures from the settlement of the suit TSR brought against the Dangerous Journeys game. I also spoke with an author who was owed over a half million in royalties.

The Space Gamer #65 (September/October 1983) announced a deep 'reorganization' of TSR Hobbies with the firing of 40 employees and the birth of four companies with the same board of directors (you, Brian Blume and Kevin Blume) on June, 24. We see the birth of TSR, Inc.,

TSR Ventures, TSR International and TSR Entertainment Corporation. The article refers to "financial setbacks in the first half of 1983" as possible cause of this split. Why was this structure put in place? Was it effective? We know that TSR Entertainment was renamed D&D Entertainment Corporation and that it was instrumental, with your guidance, to the birth of the D&D Cartoon Show and that TSR Inc. was 'the' TSR for fans and professionals, but what happened to the other two companies of the group?

Discharged employees were rehired or replaced all too soon. As to the rest, aside from the fact that there were six members of the BoD, that is essentially correct, although I am not quite sure of what 'financial setbacks' means. As I recall, TSR's financial report for 1983 showed over $32 million in gross sales, with a marginal profit - very marginal. That was not so much a setback as it was a demonstration of poor management.

It might be worth noting that the sales manager in position in 1983 pushed a lot of product into outlets that I knew would not be able to sell it. I was vocal about this and what I warned against was ignored. When returns came in 1984, the sales manager had moved on to another position, his track record of 'sales success' at TSR likely adding much luster to his resume.

I had virtually no input in or knowledge of TSR Ventures. I was kept in the dark. It was involved in production of plastics and toys in the Far East, but beyond that I can't say. TSR International was established to manage overseas business, distribution and sales there, licensing and production. When the chickens of the Blume mismanagement of the corporation came home to roost early in 1985, TSR Ventures was folded. Later on, when Williams was in control of the corporation the same thing happened in regards to TSR International and Dungeons & Dragons Entertainment Corp.

I can also say that from what I recall Kevin and Brian saying, the separate corporations were aimed at keeping foreign income away from US taxation - they were envisioning millions and millions of dollars rolling in. The ownership of D&D Entertainment Corporation was held by the TSR Exempt Profit Sharing Trust and, as that trust covered in the main Brian and Kevin and me, it is likely that this corporation was seen as a more or less hidden income source by the Blumes.

When I was instructed by the Blumes to move to the West Coast and head up TSR Entertainment, the first thing I noted out there was a distinct dislike of TSR, this from earlier contact with the Blumes, as far as I could ascertain. Thus I immediately requested the BoD for a name change, and I got my way without any real fight. That is likely due to the fact that the Blumes considered the operation a good way to keep me out of their hair, and the name I asked for was a logical one considering the recognition factor.

TSR'S INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

How much better these could have been I often wondered back then. I had plans for European operations that the Blumes quashed.

It seems to me that the burgeoning TSR Hobbies/TSR Inc. international operations developed in three main directions: the English speaking world (Canada, Australia and New Zealand, United Kingdom), Japan and continental Europe. I'd like to know more European operations. In Europe I suppose the first company to do business with (then) fledgling TSR Hobbies was Games Workshop, the British company started by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone. How was born this relationship?

The initial expansion into Europe, that into the UK, occurred while I was still in effective charge of things at TSR. I went to England and interviewed a number of candidates for exclusive distributor status there. In the end, and much against the advice of the consultant TSR had hired, I selected Games Workshop, for I was convinced that Ian Livingston and Steve Jackson were dedicated gamers and knew their market. I liked them, as a matter of fact, so GW was given the exclusive, and that proved to be a good thing. After that we went on to the Continent, where a couple of other prospects for distribution there were interviewed. This part of my trip was less successful.

Games Workshop was licensed to print UK editions of various D&D and AD&D titles. I remember softback books of the AD&D core rulebooks (PHB, DMG, MM), some more or less original accessories such as "Dungeon Floor Plans", an UK printing of the D&D B1 module and so on. Were such projects motivated by the need to avoid high import costs or to meet a growing demand in the most satisfying and quickest way possible?

You have it. Ian and Steve spoke to me at length about their market, the resistance to the price of imported game products and I listened and agreed. Thus, they were granted a license to produce TSR products in the UK, even print their own material unique to the UK. The lower cost of products then brought greater demand.

Games Workshop printed in 1978 (there is a photo in "White Dwarf" #5 of some guests of Games Day III having in their hands brand new copies) an entirely original D&D Basic rulebook, using the original US text but with entirely new art and book design. It's one of the rarest D&D titles in existence, long thought a myth by American collectors... Did you ever see it? What was your opinion at the time?

That's going back a ways! Yes, I saw the work, and I approved. Ian and Steve convinced me that their audience didn't like the illustrations used in American versions of the game, so I gave them the okay to produce their own. I had a copy of the Basic Set rules, but it was lost when Lorraine Williams took over TSR, locked me out of my office, and seized and never returned most of the games and books I had collected and stored therein.

An advertisement in "White Dwarf" #18 informs the British public that TSR Hobbies has opened a branch in the United Kingdom, aptly named TSR UK,

that will be open for business from March, 31 1980. This branch, with ups and lows, will endure till the final days of the company. Why TSR Hobbies decided to distribute itself in the UK and, I suppose, Europe? Did you think the British market deserved a direct intervention, having grown large enough, or were there disagreements with Games Workshop?

The UK marketplace was an excellent one for TSR. When it became clear that we could not reach agreement with GW in regards a merger and Games Workshop was moving to develop and market its own product line, the only logical step was to create a subsidiary operation in the UK. This was again my purview and during a trip to England I hired Don Turnbull to head up the new operation. TSR UK would also serve as the clearing house for business in Europe until further development could be accomplished.

Outside the UK, continental Europe started to be receptive to D&D. I remember seeing articles on the game in a now defunct Italian magazine, "Pergioco", published (I think) in 1981-82, similar articles in the French magazine "Jeux & Strategie" during the same period and I have heard of similar articles in Germany too. Publishing in a foreign language is of course a difficult operation. What was the first foreign (for English speakers...) language in which D&D was translated and why?

Copies of the D&D game and then the AD&D line were sent to various Continental game dealers from about 1976 onwards, some by TSR, some by its distributors. There were strong followings for the games in many European nations, D&D being the established one, AD&D not as popular. As far as I can recall, the first translation was into French, that because of the very large audience for the game in that country and because of my relationship with Francois Marcela Froideval, who could oversee the checking of the translated product. Of course even as that was going forward we were working towards other translations - German, Spanish, Swedish, Italian, etc. A little later the arrangement was concluded for translation into Japanese.

When (did) TSR started to think about an Italian edition of D&D? I remember an interview to Don Turnbull in "Pergioco" about a possible Italian edition "not before 1984" (if I recall correctly) but D&D Basic was translated into Italian only in 1986. Was Editrice Giochi involved in this project from the beginning or were there other companies interested?

I was eager to get the D&D game translated into as many different languages as possible, as many non-English-speaking gamers wrote or spoke to me about this, the need for having the game in their native tongue in order for its audience to grow to a proper size. Finding the correct publisher for such an undertaking, striking an agreement and then getting the work of translation done takes time. As I recall, I had meetings in Germany, Italy and Spain in 1983 where the President of TSR International, Andre Moullin and me interviewed a number of publishers. After that, in 1984, agreements were signed. Getting the Italian translation done by 1986 is not actually untimely, considering the nature of translation and publishing. Why Don Turnbull was commenting on this matter though, one in which he was not actually concerned, I can not speak to.

I suppose TSR UK was charged to develop not only the British market but the European one too. How important was Europe, United Kingdom included, for TSR Hobbies operations? Were there any plans to open further TSR branches in Europe along the TSR UK model? I have heard rumours about an aborted TSR France to be lead by Francois Marcela Froideval.

First, no, TSR UK was not given charge of the Continental market. They were to facilitate export of English language products to the Continent, but the management of business there was in the hands of TSR, Inc., and then TSR International. There was some resistance to this arrangement from TSR UK, but that did not change the nature of its mission statement.

When I visited the UK to set up the basis for that branch, I also visited Paris, met with Francois Marcela Froideval and set up the beginnings of TSR France. We had been in correspondence prior to my visit and Francois had already done well in my view. He had found an excellent location for a TSR game shop, was ready to launch a magazine, made contact with translators and printers and I approved. This process went forward with great resistance from the Blumes. They soon hired a brother-in-law of theirs, Dick Gleason, to head up international business. With their approval, Gleason quashed the French subsidiary. I was absolutely beside myself upon hearing this, but there was nothing I could do except to hire Francois on to my personal staff at TSR, for I valued his business ideas and creative talent. Gleason's tenure at TSR was thankfully brief, as he was an embarrassment and I somehow managed to prevail in regards the hiring of Andre Moullin to fill the vacancy. Francois' creative talent has since proven to be rather considerable and I am certain had he been allowed to head up and form the French subsidiary, it would have been a success. We agreed that a model based around company-owned or franchised game shops was the best way to develop and support the market. Here the success of Games Workshop supports this concept.

I also visited Switzerland to meet with someone there in regards the German-language market. We set up a distribution arrangement with him, but that proved less successful than was hoped for and the arrangement was changed in relatively short order.

TSR UK became quickly much more than a sales office for British customers: they produced an excellent range of modules, the U and UK series for AD&D, B/X1 and X8 for D&D, some really fine accessories such as AC 9 and so on. Was this creative activity a result of requests from the Lake Geneva offices for more products or an idea of TSR UK management approved by TSR US managers?

The initial concept, part of Don Turnbull's mission, was to develop the British market. That included creating unique new product material. By no means did I ever think that the gamers in the United States had a corner on creativity. When arranging for the aborted French subsidiary, Francois was likewise charged with creating new material for the French audience. Had I been involved later on, I assure you that in arranging for other subsidiaries, which I intended to do, these would also have been given the latitude to develop such products. National tastes tend to differ and such products not only encourage creative work in the gaming audience there, but also solidify the general following for the underlying game system, their own number now having a part in its creation. As an added benefit, at least some of the material produced thus could also serve as support for the US game, that from non-English-speaking

nations translated into English. It seemed a winning situation all round.

The highest and for many British gamers the most painful moment of TSR UK's activity was Imagine magazine. The magazine was launched as a competitor for Games Workshop's White Dwarf and, presumably, as a 'mouthpiece' for TSR products. It enjoyed a large following, seriously threatening White Dwarf's grip on the British market, but with issue #31 it was closed down. When some disgruntled staffers left TSR UK and started a new publication, "Game Master", to attempt to preserve the Imagine's experience (they kept various popular features as Pelinore, reviews, letters page, comic strips and so on), the magazine ran various articles with behind the scene details of Imagine's closure. Their pieces explicitly accused you of having never believed in the usefulness of an independent magazine for TSR UK, that you couldn't stand the freedom enjoyed by Imagine's writers to disapprove 'crappy' TSR products and to feature in approving terms competitors' titles and so having decreed, once back at the helm of TSR, Imagine's demise due to financial reasons. Perhaps these were only ex employees' poisoned arrows, but I'd like to know your opinion in thus subject (and many old British fans too!).

It was my plan for TSR UK to publish a UK version of "Dragon" magazine. This I meant to be named "Royal Dragon" and its content were to be about 50% that taken from "Dragon" the balance, and all ad space, coming from contributors and advertisers in the UK. Don Turnbull did not favour this plan and eventually he convinced the Board of Directors that his "Imagine" magazine was a superior idea. I was dubious, but I agreed. As a matter of fact, the magazine never showed any substantial profit, generally ran at a loss from a purely financial standpoint. Of course, the advertising and promotion of the TSR line and the goodwill the publication generated, justified its continuation for the time. Had the expense of half the content, general layout too, been absorbed by "Dragon" magazine, which was then generating a profit of something like a million dollars annually, and the name I urged been used so as to make it clear that it was tied to the D&D game, I believe the publication would have made a profit, been more effective and still satisfied the individual tastes of the British gaming audience. That is a moot question now, certainly.

As for lower echelon staffers believing that they were paid to be independent critics of TSR products, somehow being given free rein to exercise their budding critical talents, I can only shake my head in wonderment at such hubris. Biting the hand that feeds one has always been considered in bad taste. If such persons felt so overwhelming an urge to be independent, they should have sought employment elsewhere or struck out on their own. In short, I have absolutely no sympathy for such views. The very reason for their employment was to promote the TSR line and its success paid the wages for their livelihood.

As a matter of fact, though, their misguided aims were not of the least consideration when I was again serving as the CEO of the corporation after the Blumes were removed from management roles. With other corporate officers assisting, we held a series of meetings to determine what steps were needed to bring TSR out of its debt position, have it again generate a positive cash flow, show a profit from sales. Of course some of these meetings were with Don Turnbull, he bringing full financial reports of the TSR UK operation to us for review. As we made drastic changes and cuts in the US operation, we also took a hard look at things in the UK. The magazine was costing money and we could not afford that, so it was cut. That's the story, pure and simple. Had the Blumes not so mismanaged TSR, such drastic action would not have been necessary. They had and I had no choice but to make unpalatable decisions. Better a magazine in the UK cease operation than the parent company go under, right? We had the bank breathing down our necks, of course, and excision as that of a losing operation of a subsidiary went a long way to demonstrate that we were serious about righting the TSR ship. By such means we kept the bank from calling in its loans.

Another parenthetical note: I was very much against borrowing as the Blumes had done, and as far as the bank they chose to do business with, I was absolutely opposed to it. That bank did not even vaguely understand our business, had no liaison officer who would work with us, and I hated having to deal with them. Only by the most rigorous means was I able to hold them off in their desire to perfect their security and begin collecting - forcing TSR into receivership thus, of course.

Had I remained in control of TSR, it is nearly certain that "Imagine" magazine would have resumed publication in due time, as the finances of TSR and TSR UK allowed. After all, "Dragon" magazine was my conception and I was likewise convinced that a similar publication in the UK subsidiary was needed for long-term success. Of course had I in the interim learned of the staffers' attitude, I would have directed Don Turnbull to move the would-be independent journalists to positions in the warehouse or to janitorial and tea service ones and required him to hire more mature and reasoning replacements for them on the editorial staff.

Lest the readers think I am too harsh in my dismissal of the "Imagine" Magazine's staff in regards to their efforts to become "independent journalists", allow me to assure you that prior to that there were a few persons on the staff of "Dragon" magazine that had the same delusions. I personally spoke to them at length to disabuse them of their fond notions and there were changes made in personnel.

Why had TSR US refused to distribute Imagine magazine in the US? I noticed the magazine did make an appearance in Mail Order Hobby Shops catalogues, but only in 1989, various years after the magazine's closure.

That question I can not answer. I was unaware that any refusal of distribution ever occurred. I can speculate on the matter for readers, though, thusly. As TSR did not distribute to shops, only to the book trade and to distributors, such sales were the only option in regard to "Imagine" magazine. Discounts to such trade on all products was in the range of 60%. Thus, to manage even a break-even on the magazine, do nothing but cover cost, TSR would have had to acquire it from TSR UK at about 20% of its cover price. Frankly, TSR UK would have lost money in such an arrangement, with shipping costs for air mail delivery to keep things timely and for it not gained much in circulation.

TSR FOR SALE?

I first heard of this, TSR being on the block, whilst in California. A friend and business associate called from New York, warned me that «Kevin Blume was shopping TSR on the city streets» and demanded that I get back to Lake Geneva as quickly as possible to find out what was wrong. The repute of the corporation was, of course, being destroyed by this willy-nilly attempt to sell it of.

Leaving California with two major projects left up in the air - a new D&D cartoon show and the major theatrical motion picture - I flew back to Lake Geneva and spent a full week investigating the state of TSR finances, questioning officers and key management personnel under the Blumes. On the following week, as the monthly meeting of the Board of Directors, I presented a rather lengthy paper dealing with the sorry state of corporate finances, the clear mismanagement of TSR by Kevin Blume and concluding with a demand for his resignation. Kevin was livid. Brian demanded how I proposed the company could run without Kevin and I told him the same way it did prior to Kevin's elevation to senior management, by him and me. Brian retorted hotly he could not run the company any more. At that I shrugged and said, «Very well, in that case I will run it alone because Kevin has proven himself totally incompetent». In closing, I assured the assembled members of the board that I could certainly turn things around in a few months were I given the authority of CEO.

I fully expected to be dismissed at that time. Instead the 'outside directors' were forced to agree, as there was no question that the corporation was in debt to the bank for about $1.5 million and there appeared to be no way to repay the loan. In the final vote, Kevin voted against my motion for his removal, Brian abstained (which speaks volumes) and the stooges voted for it, so the motion carried four to one. However, the stooges were not about to put me in charge of company. They insisted on hiring a 'qualified person' from outside (that TSR was in terrible financial condition seemed not to matter to those three) and so a pro-tempore president was found from the ranks of AMA candidates, then put into office in a week's time. Meantime, I was active in the corporate management, this de-facto role enabled by means which will be elucidated when I answer the next question. In that time I managed to prevail against a suggestion from the stooges that the corporation sell "Dragon" magazine and a suggestion from the head of sales and marketing - who I had dismissed thereafter - that we cut the RPGA to save money.

A major article in The Space Gamer #74 (May/June 1985) mentioned the possible sale of TSR, Inc. to a Beverly Hills investment group that had filed a letter of intent for such purpose. Incidentally, you were located in Beverly Hills during the D&D Entertainment Corporation life. Were you involved in this potential sale?

One of the very strangest things I can say about TSR was the intransigence of the Blumes in regards to seizing opportunity. Earlier on, whilst they were assuredly fully aware that the corporation was in trouble, I brought them an offer from a wealthy entrepreneur in Beverly Hills. This person offered the Blumes $7,500 per share for their stock. He planned to buy them out, manage the finances of the company and leave my in charge of marketing and creative. That offer would have provided Brian with over $5 million, Kevin with $1.5 million and escape from impending doom. They made no response to the offer.

When the Board of Directors removed Kevin and hired on their AMA-related temporary president, the stooges also asserted that the only hope for TSR was to have a white knight coming to its rescue, but it out. That was utter nonsense, of course, but I played a card that they thought a trump. I knew of a potential investor and I would see if that person would be interested in saving the company. This gave me a de-facto power of considerable sort, because that investor, the one who had made the previous buyout offer to the Blumes, did indeed respond positively, furnishing the noted letter of intent. Meantime, hoping to not have to deal thus, I paid a call upon the bank to see if a small ($50,000) short-term loan could be furnished so as to enable TSR to begin production of product bound to make money (I had instructed creative staff to begin putting together the material from Dragon magazine while I wrote additional work, so the book that was published as Unearthed Arcana was in progress then). The bank refused so I went ahead and urged the outside group to move forward. I was indeed playing both ends against the middle.

This three-man group then sent its most astute financial member into TSR and a massive auditing of TSR s operations began. This uncovered the major areas of mismanagement I noted earlier in this interview and a good deal more. As this lengthy process went on, the investment group kept lowering its per share offer, thinking that they were in a position to literally steal the company. The stooge directors wrung their hands and did nothing. Meantime the work for Unearthed Arcana was finished and we managed to publish the book, despite the finances. The Oriental Adventures book was also in process, its writing a top priority. I was taking no salary and I deferred royalties to an indefinite time. All officers were taking only 50% of their normal salary.

Reception of Unearthed Arcana was excellent. At that point I exercised my stock option. With the new shares, those owned by family members, I could count on just over 50% of all shares voting in my favour. Recognizing that, the stooges did not object when I called a board meeting and took some bold steps. It must be noted that Brian Blume also held a like option and, had he exercised it, control would have reverted to him and Kevin. He did not believe in TSR, so he would not risk the $70,000 cost for option exercise. That said, back to the board meeting!

First I told them that I was assuming the role of CEO. The pro-tem president in an earlier meeting informed me he would stay on if his salary was increased to $80,000 anually, he received a five year contract, and that he be given 10% of the corporate stock. On hearing that, I gave him the news that he must seek employment elsewhere, as his position with TSR was no longer available.

Next I informed the board that I was going to decline the latest offer from the investment group and inform them that we were no longer interested in dealing with them.

Lastly I stated that I planned to call a shareholders meeting soon and at that time there would certainly be a considerable change in the composition of the

board. That was an error, certainly, But I was so full of indignation at how the stooges had facilitated the near-ruin of the company I could not restrain my better judgement.

Shortly after this came my downfall.

Of course, as The Space Gamer #75 (July/August 1985) reported, TSR was not sold and the mysterious investment group withdrew its offer, you were back in control as Chairman of the Board of Directors and the Blumes had left the company . But in your FAQ you state: Three sterling individuals [TSR s board other members beyond the Blumes and Gary Gygax?] were aligned with Williams and the Blumes in the dispute over whether or not the latter could sell their shares, and an additional 700 they secretly purchased by option exercise to thus allow Lorraine Williams majority control of TSR . Does this mean that the Blume were still TSR shareholders and so able to influence the company s direction and future? And when and how did Lorraine Dille Williams enter the picture?

This is indeed a most poignant question for me. The Blumes were out of management roles, but they did, of course, retain their shareholdings. As I took control of TSR, the Blumes made a tender of their shares, per the Shareholder s Agreement in place, this being made to all other shareholders, but the amount demanded per share was not in compliance with the agreement, so I ignored the offer, stating that it was not in compliance.

Lorraine Dille Williams had been brought into TSR by me. Her brother, Flint Dille, was a friend of mine. He and I had co-authored four multi-path fantasy adventure game books and he was the co-creator of the film script mentioned earlier. Thus I had met his sister, Lorraine, her husband Jim and considered her a trustworthy person. When I learned of TSR s financial difficulties and told Flint of the situation, he suggested that his sister might be willing to invest in the company. So I contacted her, went into Chicago where she resided, to meet with Lorraine. She demurred in regard to immediate investment, but suggested that she could perhaps help. After some discussion, she made a trip to Lake Geneva, looked at financial information and then proposed she be given an officer s position in the corporation and from that position she could both assist in restoring the financial stability of TSR and be in better position to know what sort of investment in the corporation she could make.

Lorraine seemed to be effective in her role as a sort of general manager, this allowing me more time to oversee the critical creative matters, for successful new product was the only means by which TSR could get out of depth and begin generating a profit once again. She was in my confidence, but I began to become uneasy about her after two incidents. In one she stated that she held gamers in contempt, that they were socially beneath her. In the other, when I stated that I planned to see that the employees gained share ownership when the corporate crises were passed in recognition of their loyalty, Lorraine had turned to my personal assistant Gail Carpenter (now Gail Gygax, my wife) and said: Over my dead body! .

Shortly thereafter, the Blumes made a second tender offer of their shares in TSR. In discussing this with Lorraine Williams, it became evident to me that she desired to acquire all of their shareholding, not a part as I offered to her. This disturbed me, so I checked her personnel file and discovered that she, as general manager, had arbitrarily increased her salary by some $10,000 annually. At that point I was ready to discharge her immediately, but I was advised against it, for the company was still very shaky. I decided to wait and that was a gross error indeed. Meantime, a third tender offer from the Blumes was presented.

In a few days time I heard of secret negotiations between Williams and the Blumes. I immediately acquired legal counsel, the main law firm in conjunction with another in Wisconsin prepared an injunction, while I delivered an offer to purchase all Blume-owned shares in TSR to Brian at his home late in the evening. My position was, and is, that the buy-sell agreement for shareholders of TSR stock was violated by the deal between the Blumes and Williams. Without going into details, I can relate that the board member who was an attorney was apparently working on behalf of the Blumes and Williams and that the CFO of TSR was also doing so, as a the stock book showed some strange entries. To cut to the chase, the matter went to court. A local judge who clearly did not understand contract law ruled in favour of Williams. This particular judge was the most appealed one in the state, and he lost the next election, never returned to the bench. That is no consolation. My attorneys wanted a huge sum to appeal, so in a very turbulent mental state I decided to sell out. In retrospect, I should have instituted a new, federal lawsuit over copyright and trade mark issues, but I was heartily sick of courts and of TSR, so I just wanted to get away from the whole mess.

It is of possible interest to readers to learn that the sum paid for the Blume-held shares was in the neighbourhood of $300 per share, not the $7,500 that they could have received had they accepted the buyout offer I brought to them about a year and a half before. To the best of my knowledge and belief, later legal problems enabled Williams to claw back a good deal of the sums due to Kevin and Brian, so that in the end it is possible that both came out of their treacherous dealings with very little to show for it indeed.

In November 1985, reports the British magazine Game Master (issue #2, December 1985) Gary Gygax is no longer in control of the destiny of TSR Inc. having been replaced as President and C.E.O. by Lorraine Williams but the news item intriguingly states EGG will be retained in a creative capacity : Were you really planning to stay after Lorraine Dille Williams took control of the company?

No, I was certainly not planning anything of the sort. The information, properly disinformation, was most likely furnished to the publication in question by Lorraine Williams through some spokesperson. I know that TSR was silent in regards the matter of my separation and would not inform any callers of my no longer being associated with the company.

In GameMaster issue #3 (March 1986) I have discovered a really intriguing mention of a TSR 1986 catalogue with a preview of a book named Unearthed Arcana II: could you tell us something more about this project?

No, I have no idea as to what was then being planned by TSR. From a speculative standpoint, I would suggest that TSR was then seeking another hit with a hardbound supplement to AD&D, but before it was completed Williams directed that AD&D Second Edition be done instead. As she was much opposed to me, she undoubtedly wanted to stop production of the original books, as I received royalties from their sale.

It is worth mentioning here that Williams was warned by a knowledgeable employee that releasing a second edition of the game as she planned to do would lose a large portion of the existing audience. This individual estimated the loss at about 50%. Subsequent analysis proved him to absolutely on target. The loss of audience explains the spate of new products following the release of Second Edition and the growing debt, as more and more products chased a shrinking market.

AFTER TSR

While I had thought to proceed as a competitor of TSR, Lorraine Williams had other ideas

In 1986 you are Chairman of the Board of Directors, New Infinities Productions, Inc. . This company published, if I recall correctly, a complete RPG, Cyborg Commando (written by you, Frank Mentzer and Kim Mohan!) and two supplements in the Fantasy Master Gary Gygax presents... line. Were these efforts successful in sales terms? Why N.I.P. closed down?

I invested a substantial amount in New Infinities Productions, Inc. as did a number of other persons, although none to the extend I did. This I was convinced to do by a fellow I knew, a wargamer named Forrest Baker who was at the time working as a consultant for a major accounting firm, that firm and he having been called in by the TSR Board of Directors during the 1984-5 crisis there. When Baker learned of my separation from TSR, he called upon me, urging me to start a new company. I assured him I had no interest in managing another game company, that all I desired was to concentrate on creative work. Baker prepared a plan, complete with banking and legal counsel components, accounting and assurance of investment capital to the tune of $1 - $2 million whenever needed. I was sceptical, but I accompanied Baker to a series of meetings in Chicago. These were impressive and the only hitch came when the investors representative failed to meet with us in the offices of the law firm that was to serve as counsel. While in their presence, Baker made a phone call to the investors, spoke at length for all to hear, so we understood it was an oversight, but that all was in line.

It was at that point I was convinced to go with the formation of a company, with Baker as the CEO. Once the new operation was running, some product on line, he would bring in the investment capital. I would be the Chairman of the Board, but most of my time could be spent writing books and designing games. I had an idea for a new RPG that I wished to begin on as soon as possible. I assisted Baker in getting other investors. In due course I told him that it was time for outside investment. He stalled for a month. When finally I demanded he produce as he had promised, he informed us all that it was time for him to move on, as he had done all he could for NIPI mainly draw down a large salary for doing virtually nothing except perpetrate what I consider a fraud. I was astonished, then irate, but too late.

For those wondering about Mr. Baker, he almost immediately disappeared from his residence in the area, he and his wife evidently in process of divorce. A local bank contacted me, for it seems he had some considerable debt with them and could not be found. When by happenstance I later discovered the whereabouts of Mr. Baker, I passed along his new address to the bank. They said that the person living there denied being Forrest Baker, and asked if I had a photograph of him. As fate would have it, I did indeed, and furnished that to the bank as well. The resident was indeed said Baked. What happened after that I do not know.

Anyway, after Baker departed I thought that bringing Don Turnbull to serve as the CEO might right matters, but that did not pan out. Eventually the investors in the corporation, at Turnbull s instigation, forced it into bankruptcy, which was in my considered opinion a huge error. I had used my last available funds to pay off vendors, and planned to keep the operation running on a marginal basis while I completed the new RPG and published it, the income from that then likely getting the company back into full operation.

As for the Cyborg Commando RPG, it was designed by Frank Mentzer and Kim Mohan based on my outline, it being the initial part of a three-part SF RPG. As I was then immersed in writing the last five Gord the Rogue novels so as to have product for NIPI to sell and generate income, I could not spend any real design time on the CC RPG and I know it suffered thus. The best selling NIPI products were my novels. The other game products did marginally well, as did the other novels NIPI published. What was really needed was the major new RPG system I was developing slowly because of the novel writing. That pretty well sums up the NIPI fiasco, for that is the most apt description I can think of for the whole matter.

After the New Infinities Productions demise you started to work on Dangerous Dimensions , a new fantasy RPG to be published by GDW, but the name was quickly changed to Dangerous Journeys because the DD acronym ran afoul of TSR. Despite the change of the name, TSR sued. What were the official reasons for suing GDW? Did you suspect that the last thing TSR wanted was a successful fantasy RPG with your name attached?

What I worked on then was the game I had wanted to do while New Infinities was extant. When I began work the genre was horror and Mike McCulley joined me as co-author to produce an RPG I named Unhallowed (here I must say that McCulley was a really excellent writer and I am sad to have totally lost touch with him: I fear that the experience with the TSR suit embittered him thus gaming has lost a potentially influential designer). As this was developing, NEC and JVC became interested in the game, licensed the system in fantasy, so I had to switch gears and rush into development of that genre. Here I enlisted the creative talents of Dave Newton, and between us we produced the Mythus RPG, the second genre of the umbrella system then named Dangerous Dimensions the choice of NEC and JVC from several suggestions I provided. During the process a publisher for a fiction line was lined up and

negotiations for other licenses were in progress. Game Designers Workshop was on board as the publisher of the paper RPG. The prototype of the game was shown at the GAMA show in Las Vegas. At that point Williams was informed by her staff at the show that I was about to release a new fantasy RPG.

When we heard that TSR objected to the umbrella title, I immediately contacted NEC and JVC to determine if they would object to a name change to avoid a lawsuit one likely to have little merit, but costly. They agreed with my assessment and I changed the umbrella title to Dangerous Journeys.

Despite that, TSR sued, attempting to get a temporary injunction preventing release and sale of the new game products. In this they failed.

GDW and the rest involved in the project, the big companies plainly excluded, were sued for copyright infringement of the AD&D and D&D games. At this point the biggies dropped out of things, not wanting to become in the lawsuit. This was devastating to us, of course, because we were certain that if they joined us, TSR would have had no recourse but to drop the action, as the corporation was not financially able to fight against powerful corporations. The TSR complaint was patently ridiculous, of course, but to a court totally unfamiliar with RPGs, not worthy of dismissal before proceeding. Imagine someone not familiar with either chess or checkers. So the publisher of the checkers game goes to court claiming chess infringes on checkers. Your Honor, look at the similarities: the board is exactly the same, the game is played by two opponents, each side has pieces called men and there are kings in play. Moves alternate and are varied and, as in checkers, chess pieces can promote to be more powerful. To top that off there are captures, and one side eliminates the other to win! . That was the sort of thing we were facing.

For the interested reader, there is available somewhere online a copy of the original TSR motion put before the court in Peoria, Illinois. Many a person who has read and analyzed its contents will attest to its lack of merit. As noted, however, the court allowed TSR to proceed and so many months went by in which documents were turned over to them, depositions taken, and so forth. The cost of this was very considerable for us, the defendants, and for TSR the legal expense likely ran to something well over a million dollars. Three separate law firms reviewed the complaint filed by TSR and assessed it as one of the sort used by a larger company to force a smaller one out of business.

At the point where it was the turn of the defendants to begin their discovery and take depositions, our legal counsel asked for a great deal of additional money to carry on. Even though they believed we would prevail and knowing that TSR was in financial trouble and was running short of funds, no further work would be done without such advances. I had no choice but to play the hand dealt. Without letting TSR know that we were in a corner, I suggested that as the court was urging, we should discuss possible settlement before trial. That Williams readily agreed indicated to me that we had been correct in assessing TSR s financial position as weak, but as our lawyers were not interested in that, it made no difference. After many meetings and days of negotiations, a settlement was agreed to. TSR got the game system, GDW was paid costs of production for its inventory and we received a large cash sum to be paid in installments.

The DJ game was literally strangled in its infancy, so it never had truly a chance to establish itself despite having some real sales potential I bought it too at the time of its release! I understand that this series of bad experiences could have a big part in your decision to turn to computer RPGs to quote your FAQ again (not to mention the huge market for them, of course!). After two botched deals, not for your fault, you went back to paper RPGs with the Lejendary Adventure game. Why did you decide to write another fantasy RPG in a market seemingly saturated by fantasy titles?

It is essentially correct that the Mythus game was killed before it had a chance. Because it was a complex one, I had urger GDW to release the MythusPrime material as an introductory book, then produce the remainder of the game system Mythus , Mythus Magic , Mythus Bestiary , Epic of Aerth and Necropolis all of which had been completed and turned over to GDW at the conclusion of the publishing agreement. My advice was not taken, so initial sales were somewhat slow. Realizing that a low-cost introductory book for a large and complex system was a good idea after all, GDW then published the primer book, and at that point sales began to increase substantially. Sadly, that was just before we were forced to settle the lawsuit.

It is also correct that I was disgusted with things, angry that NEC and JVC had not stuck with us. Someone who I knew from my time on the West Coast approached me for a computer RPG and that determined things. As noted, I spent the next two years writing game proposals and games aimed at the computer. Two were sold, neither went into production. Tired of that sort of thing, I returned to writing paper games once again.

There is no question that the fantasy RPG commands the great majority of consumer interest. I m the process of developing RPG-like games for the computer, I had devised a simple and rules-light system based on skill-bundles. This approach was so different from any existing paper games that I determined to employ it in that field. So I set to work writing the Lejendary Adventure game system, the first genre developed being that of Fantastical Science, as found in the initial beta-test version of the Lejendary AsteRogues RPG that is posted online. As the market is most interested in pure fantasy, however, I then went on to do the Lejendary Adventure fantasy RPG, much of that work not in print, with the balance slated for release later this year, in 2003, and possibly going on into 2004. As the LA game is not like any other in print and very different indeed from D&D Third Edition, I am confident it will establish its place over time, grow as gamers play the system and find it to their liking, for it covers all elements of the RPG form, does not focus on combat or on theatrics and acting, but handles those features and others equally well. Only rules lawyers are likely to find the Lejendary Adventure game unsuitable. That the LA game has the spirit and soul of my earlier efforts should be evident and even though it is not class based, it does manage archetypes well even as it allows free rein to players in building unique avatars as they envisage their game character should be. For all those reasons I determined to publish in the fantasy RPG arena.

How the game is going, in sales and popularity terms?

As of now it seems certain that a vast number of FRPG fans have no inkling that the Lejendary Adventure game system exists. Launching in the face of the

release of D&D Third Edition, that done without much in the way of advertising and promotion, has been an uphill struggle. As one fellow said to me: It must be tough wrestling with a 500-pound gorilla you created . Despite that, we have managed to build a solid core of devotees and the audience is growing, slowly, even without advertising. The interested reader should visit www.lejendary.com, that website being the place where the hardcore participants are most active and all having to do with the LA game system can be found through postings and links.

The publisher, Hekaforge Productions, is regularly releasing support material. Sometime next year we expect to begin running regular advertisements for the game system and when the LA MMPOROG being done by Dreams-Interactive goes forward, it is certain that many more people will become aware of the paper game, begin playing it.

Do you have any foreign translation deals?

There have been inquiries from several countries about translations, but as of now only one prospective deal has been made and that depends on the translators finding a publisher for their efforts. Realistically, what this means is nothing solid is in place.

GARY GYGAX AND D20 SYSTEM

Heh, D20, the one ring to rule them all

When TSR Inc. was bought by Wizards of the Coast, what was your reaction?

For about a year prior to the acquisition of TSR by Wizards of the Coast, I was aware of the extreme financial difficulties that Williams had gotten TSR into. Numbers of employees there would speak to me surreptitiously to do so openly would have meant their dismissal, they assured me. About six months prior to the sale, one such person told me that Williams announced to all staff that she had sold the headquarters building and the accounting department of TSR to the printer who was doing the majority of that work for the company. I could hardly contain myself, but I managed to say nothing that would give things away. When my wife and I were alone, I pointed out that an accounting department can t be sold thus. What had happened was that the printer had foreclosed, taken control of the building undoubtedly pledged as security against money owed to him and also acted to secure TSR s income and was in control of their receipts.

At that point I was extremely concerned. Bankruptcy loomed and if TSR went into receivership, then the D&D game could be tied up, out of production, for a long period of time. That would certainly have a very adverse affect on the whole of the hobby gaming field.

When eventually I heard that WotC was involved, making efforts to acquire TSR, I was pleased. A successful gaming company like that seemed the perfect solution to the dilemma. When Peter Adkison was in Lake Geneva, I spoke with him several times and the first thing I said were words of congratulations. Later on I also gave him congratulations after he and I had defeated my son Luke in a long and hard-fought game of Operation Overlord , where he played the British and I the US forces in the invasion of Normandy.

When Ryan Dancey announced that the TSR name and logo would have been suppressed, what was your sentiment?

That news saddened me in a way. Although I had come to dislike the name, TSR, I thought that it was an established brand and dropping it seemed an error. I still hold that opinion, as I do the one that WotC should have re-released original AD&D. I urged that and not from any self-interested standpoint either, as I had divested my residual rights in the game, so its renewed publication would have brought me no financial gain.

The Third Edition of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (named Dungeons & Dragons by the all knowing business minds at Wizards of the Coast scratch another valuable brand...) and most important the d20 license has taken the gaming world literally by storm. There are now tens of companies and hundreds of products and it seems that more are released every week. What do you think about this huge publishing phenomenon?

In some ways the OGL and D20 mark are excellent marketing devices. WotC need not worry about support for the D&D Third Edition game system and the whole promotes not only that core work but spreads the system s rules and mechanics into many new areas. It has made D&D Third Edition the master of RPGs thus. The drawbacks I see are these: there is no product quality control. The D&D mark is not gaining recognition on support material produced under the OGL. WotC is not gaining any licensing income. Over-use of the D20 mark might hurt the base system, through application where it does not work well and by sheer over-exposure.

As of this time there is a considerable contraction of the D20 product popularity, this caused by saturation and through some less than quality material being released under the mark. The bloom is off the rose. Those in the gaming field are predicting the demise of many of the new D20 publishers, but only time will tell how accurate such predictions are.

Do you think that, retroactively, something similar could have been used in the past by TSR, Inc.? At the time of TSR s acquisition by Wizards of the Coast Ryan Dancey stated in a famous letter that he couldn t see any reason for TSR s creating countless gaming systems instead of using the only true successful one.

How strongly I disagree with Mr. Dancy in this and many other regards. I shall put it this way: does everybody want only one sort of food? Will one brand of soft drink satisfy all tastes? If not, why should one game system suit all gamers? The concept is in my opinion absolutely absurd. That being said, the answer to your first question is covered. Never I d assume that a single approach to the RPG would please everyone. While I did plan to make AD&D into a multi-genre game, that planned expansion would have been limited and aimed only at the game s audience so as to expand their vistas. Furthermore, I would not ever institute anything similar to the OGL. Rather I would expand licensing, doing so at a very reasonable royalty, with licensees granted use of the main trade marks of AD&D and D&D.

You have written various books for the d20 system published by Troll Lord Games, Mongoose Publishing and most recently Necromancer Games/Sword & Sorcery Studios. This is a lot of work... not to mention long interviews! What has been the critical and sales success of these products? Do you still plan to write support material the Lejendary Adventures game system?

Interviews take up some time, yes .especially this one! Especially of late, between them, board postings and e-mails about half of every day is spent. Of course, when I am hard at work on a project with a deadline, the time devoted to doing non-creative work of that sort is cut back drastically. Now to the main thrust of your questions:

Rest assured that I am first and foremost dedicated to the support and expansion of the Lejendary Adventure game system. At this time there are awaiting in the production queue at Hekaforge several of my designs: two sourcebooks, and an adventure. They are in process of completing the books that comprise my Lejendary Earth world setting and when called for I have on hand the Lejendary Pantheons book surveying the 20 pantheons of deities active on that world. Also in process of final development here are the genre expansion rules for the Lejendary AsteRogues Fantastical Science RPG and its campaign base sourcebook and adventure module. Additionally, I am actively writing articles and new game material for the Lejends Magazine periodical. I love the LA game system, enjoy creating for it as well as playing it.

Meantime I am still working on some titles that have the D20 logo. Troll Lord Games is in process of publishing the Gygaxian Fantasy World series of reference books. These are basically generic works meant to assist GMs and authors in creating fantasy world settings and stories set in them. The initial book, The Canting Crew , has been released and it is doing quite well. Following it will be: World Builder , a descriptionary of terms and useful facts for creating a world setting. Then Living Fantasy , a work dealing with the socioeconomic classes, from nobles to knaves, secular and ecclesiastic government and interaction, everyday life and the who, what, where, when, why and how of it in the late medieval/renaissance fantasy milieu. Also in progress are Essential Places , Fantasy Names , Nation Builder and possibly other titles as well.Troll Lord Games has released The Hermit module, a dual system adventure for both the D20 and LA game systems. I have completed another like module, a super-length one, The Hall of Many Panes , the manuscript for which is currently in the hands of Jon Creffield who is editing it for continuity and adding the D20 portions. The work should be completed soon and I will then turn it over to TLG for their editing and layout. We had hoped to have it in their hands by this time, but the module is so long that we fell behind schedule by two months.

Mongoose has done quite well with the Slayer s Guide to Dragons , it being co-authored by Jon Creffield. Jon, whom I regard as a truly creative author and designer, has also co-authored with me the Slayer s Guide to Undead , the manuscript for which in now at the publisher s offices.Necromancer licensed the rights to my original module, Necropolis , written for the Mythus game. They converted it to the D20 system with only minimal input from me, expanded it somewhat and all together did a superb job of it. I understand it is doing very well. I have been asked by Necromancer to write a sequel to Necropolis . I am considering that, but to be in a position to give a firm answer one way or another, I need to be able to transfer files from an old Mac+ disk. That is proving to be something of a problem, but we now have a Power Mac and it should be set up and operating in month or so: thereafter, if we have success I will be in a position to act on the offer. I can say that the material I have is being designed for a computer adventure that follows the action in Necropolis and that the setting and encounters are a step above the perils presented in the initial adventure.

Rob Kuntz and I are currently agreed in regards to designing a castle and dungeons that will be based on my original work begun in 1972, to which Rob added considerably when he joined me as co-DM of my Greyhawk campaign in 1975. While we would far prefer to write the material in a system as close as possible to original AD&D, and are thus considering HackMaster , we have not ruled out D20 or some generic fantasy RPG system. As this project is massive, it would require some two years for us to complete, we project its publication in separate parts, the first being complete in itself, but expandable to include the further parts, likely six or sever in toto, if desired. We have not yet made any formal proposals to potential publishers, but there seems to be considerable resistance to a multi-part product from those publishers we have tentatively approached. This project might not go forward, as we can not spent two years writing time without some income for such efforts, of course.

As for sales, other than what I noted above and the fact that the concerned publishers are generally interested in having me write more material, that s all I can supply. For additional input you will need to contact them.

Do you still have plans to work in the computer RPGs industry? What are your projects in this field now?

As of now I am not doing any work on designs for PCs and dedicated machines. I do have several builder/strategy and tactical historical games around that I would love to see as computer ones, but What I am working on is the development of MMPO LA RPG. The design is being done by Dreams-Interactive, http://www.dreams-interactive.com/ They will have a special website dedicated to the project up soon, I am working closely with them and a complete demo version of the game will be shown at Comdex in Las Vegas this November. Sometime relatively early in 2003 the alpha test should be running, followed as soon as possible thereafter by a first closed, then open beta test.

Have you stayed in contact with the old TSR staffers?

No, not with those who remained on for long after I left the company. This is not to intimate that there are not some of the former staffers with whom I am not on most amicable terms, more that I am closeted much of the time writing and they are generally now removed from this area. For example, Frank Mentzer is living in the far north of the state and I haven t seen him since we took a trip up there before last summer. His wife runs a bakery, The Baker s House in Minoqua: anyone in that area is advised to stop and sample the wares there!

So we come to the end at last ;) and I do hope that my responses are informative and not overly long or dull.

Search

The Kyngdoms

webmaster@thekyngdoms.com

about The Kyngdoms
faq
links
interviews
credits

cookies
privacy
terms of use
contact
subscribe

Tweet 4 +1 7

The Kyngdoms © 2005-2014